

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Fifth Sunday of Lent • Year C • April 6, 2025



*Lord Jesus,
we praise you,
for you take away the sins
of the world.
Through the grace
of the Holy Spirit,
restore us to friendship
with your
heavenly Father,
and cleanse us
from every stain of sin
in the blood
you have shed for us.
Raise us to newness of life
for the glory
of your holy name.
Amen.*

Sunday Word

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Philippians 3:8-14

John 8:1-11

The Present Wonders of God's Work

The prophet Isaiah proclaims how God is working even now for the benefit of his people. Miraculous works of the past, such as the Exodus, are one thing. But God will work new wonders, delivering his people from the exile their sins produce. "Look closely," says the prophet. "Do you not perceive his mighty works?"

Rubbish

Compared to Christ and the saving grace he offers, Saint Paul considers everything else to be so much rubbish. There is no greater gift than the one we have been given in Jesus.

Even as Saint Paul strives for greater faith in the Lord, he counsels that righteousness does not come from his own actions but as a gift of God. He looks ahead as he pursues his goal: the upward calling of God in Christ.

Forgiven and Freed

A woman is caught in the act of adultery. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Jesus for his judgment and verdict, which they think will confirm the penalty of death by stoning. Jesus uses this moment, however, to teach them all a lesson as he turns the tables. "Who among us is without sin? Whoever that might be, throw the first death-dealing stone!" (See John 8:7.) The woman is forgiven by the Lord, freed from the circle of judgment, and invited to change her ways, living uprightly.

Church Teaching: God's Reconciling Love

An Unparalleled Gift

God loves us completely and unconditionally. From this abundant well of divine graciousness flows the forgiveness of our sins. It is in Jesus that this divine love is shown fully. He comes among us not to condemn but to challenge us to live up to our high calling—the calling of the children of God to act toward one another as God has acted toward us in Christ. Jesus is the Eternal

Word that brings Salvation. He is the divine hand stretched out to sinners. He is the way that leads to God's peace.

In spite of our wandering far from God, the Son has brought us back. Humanity deserved to remain in sin and pay the consequence—eternal separation and exile from God's life. Instead, the Son of God paid the price of our sinfulness. He endured the suffering of the Cross and Death that we might turn again to God and find our true way to one another. Christ gains for us the reconciliation we cannot achieve for ourselves.

Living Out His Gift

Jesus began his public ministry with a call to repentance. He forgave sins. He also ate and drank with sinners—a stunning gesture that illustrates the reconciling nature of his mission. Jesus' suffering, Death, and Resurrection (the Paschal Mystery) represents not only his own passover into new life but *our* passover with him into new life. Jesus is thus the primordial Sacrament of Reconciliation. This gift is given to his Church, which by its many holy activities becomes a sign of conversion to the world.

The victory of Jesus over sin is first actualized for believers in Baptism. We are claimed for Christ in Baptism, incorporated into the Church, his Body, gifted with the Holy Spirit, and entrusted to each other as members of his Church. Those who fall into sin after Baptism experience the forgiveness of God in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The healing effected by this sacrament also restores one's relationship with the Church, for reconciliation with God means that we are also reconciled with God's Church.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Reconciliation does not merely mean being detached from sin. With the remission of sin, there is also the sanctification of the inner person. We are set free from all that holds us back from living out the manifold gifts we have been given in Christ.

This sanctification and freedom is expressed as we fervently share at the table of the Lord. There we grow in friendship with God and with one another. We further celebrate that divine friendship by striving to be friends with one another, extending the kingdom of justice, peace, and holiness by our words and deeds.

Key Terms

PASCHAL MYSTERY

The work of Redemption accomplished foremost by the suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. In this culminating work of his earthly mission, Christ destroyed our death and restored our life. The Paschal Mystery is made present in the liturgy of the Church and its saving grace conveyed through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1067).

TABLE OF THE LORD

Refers to the altar from which the sacraments flow and to which the People of God are invited (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1182).

Voices of Faith

The two were left alone, the pitiful and Pity. . . . They left the woman with her great sin in the keeping of him who was without sin. And because she had heard, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her," she most likely expected to be punished by one in whom no sin could be found. But he who had repelled her adversaries with the voice of justice lifted on her the eyes of mercy.

—Saint Augustine

In order to respond to the call of God and start on our journey, it is not necessary to be already perfect. We know that the prodigal son's awareness of his own sin allowed him to set out on his return journey and thus feel the joy of reconciliation with the Father. Weakness and human limitations do not present an obstacle, as long as they help make us more aware of the fact that we are in need of the redeeming grace of Christ.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

***Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 433 (God reconciles the world to himself in Christ), 1443 (reconciliation with the Church)

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*:** Chapter 18 (Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation), especially the section entitled "Recognize Sin—Praise God's Mercy," pages 242–243

***Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church*:** 119 (Jesus' Death reconciled sinners to God), 310 (reconciliation with God and with the Church)